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Hist 676: Archival Administration  
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## **Archival Administration Final**

### Prompt A

Archival institutions play a crucial role in preserving both the history and memory of the people they serve, and are an “important part of the cultural heritage of a nation.”<sup>1</sup> As archives move into the twenty-first century undergoing digitization efforts and taking in sensitive government documents, access becomes a critical issue in archival administration. I agree that in archival administration today, it’s all about access, and that current developments, for the most part, support this sentiment.

Providing access to materials is an archive’s principle goal. The purpose of holding documents and preserving them for longtime use is to aid research and ensure the documents and material held is available for future generations. Archivists survey and appraise new material with the hopes that their institution will ingest said content in order to process it and make it available to patrons and researchers. As such, archival institutions today are undertaking many goals to provide access of their collections to larger swaths of society. This is evident through large-scale digitization efforts being undertaken in most archives, which are working to provide access to anyone with internet access. These costly initiatives play an institution’s collection on the web and make certain collections and items accessible worldwide. Furthermore, many archives are undertaking public relations and outreach programs to broaden the scope of their patrons and bring in new constituents to access their collections.

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<sup>1</sup> Bradsher, 172

Access takes on a slightly different description for government archives and documents. In dealing with government materials and sensitive documents, archivists may find the need to restrict access of certain materials to patrons. However, this idea does not always hold strong for researchers, who sometimes question an archive's terms of access. And the expectations of access have changed considerably since the "1960s and 1970s, with the passage of a spate of "freedom of information" laws in most of the countries of Western Europe and North America, the concept of access to government information had evolved from a privilege to a right."<sup>2</sup> And with these advances in freedom of information policies in many nations, citizens expect access to archival documents and records. But these laws have "recognized that governments have an obligation to protect information, the release of which may invade the privacy of individuals."<sup>3</sup> As such, archival administrators need to establish general rules of access that apply to all classes of records in the institution's repository. This would "establish a common standard for all records in an institution that apply equally to all researchers."<sup>4</sup>

Archivists have a duty to facilitate use of the records in which they hold. When deciding to release and provide access to specific materials, "archivists should in each instance weigh the benefits that can accrue to society in releasing information against the harm that may be caused through doing so."<sup>5</sup> And once the records are opened, "the archives should do everything it can to facilitate research in them."<sup>6</sup> Therefore a strong reference component is critical to ensure patrons and researchers are kept aware of the institution's terms of access. A great place to inform patrons is during a researcher interview, in which case reference archivists can obtain the

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<sup>2</sup> Bradsher, 166

<sup>3</sup> Bradsher, 166

<sup>4</sup> Bradsher, 167

<sup>5</sup> Bradsher, 167

<sup>6</sup> Bradsher, 167

signature of the researcher to ensure compliance with the access policy.<sup>7</sup> Other safety protocols can be taken to ensure document content, including photocopying by staff only.

While archives are making strides to provide further access to patrons and make collections and documents accessible, there are some factors limiting an archive's accessibility. One of the main factors is funding. Due to lack of funding for most government archives, institutions have been forced to both cut staff and service hours, endangering the accessibility of their institution. Cutting staff limits accessibility because research inquiries will take longer to process and facilitate. It can also endanger the processing times for collections and the timeframe for which these materials will become accessible to researchers. This is evident in various situations, including lone archivists who head their institutions and take on the various roles within their repository, limited reference archivists in many institutions, and prolonged processing times for collections. Just as cutting staff hurts an institution's accessibility, so too does limited hours. Limited hours gravely damages accessibility because the archive will not be able to serve as many patrons in such shortened time frames. Furthermore not all patrons can make it to the archive during traditional business hours, going against the archival mission to provide access to patrons.

While there are limiting factors to the accessibility of content and facilities, many decisions undertaken by archival administrations deal with how to best provide access to patrons to both the facility and the content. Although current developments do not always support this assertion, access is the key principle in the study of archival methods as well as in the day-to-day running of an archival institution.

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<sup>7</sup> Stapleton, Lecture Notes Oct. 11, 2012

## Prompt B

As chief archivist of an established institution, moving to acquire a new collection is a large and important process which must be carefully undertaken. In considering the collection of Lucille Smith, the deceased former president of a nonprofit organization and once two-term Congresswoman, as the chief archivist I want to make sure to follow my institution's acquisition process by clearly and accurately surveying and appraising the collection. However, before even viewing the collection in person, as chief archivist I want to ensure that the collection adheres to the institution's mission.

In order to ensure that the Lucille Smith collection abides by the institution's mission, I want to ask myself, will this collection strengthen the archives and is it relevant to researchers and patrons?<sup>8</sup> In strengthening the archives, will the Smith collection increase the value of our current holdings? Is the collection of long-term, enduring value? Will the collection be of value to patrons? Most of these questions will be later answered during the survey and appraisal. However, it is necessary to ensure that acquiring the collection strengthens the overall institution. One of the main purposes of an archive is to provide access of its materials, therefore if this collection is not relevant and completely goes against the purpose of our archival mission, it is not worth considering. Furthermore, if the collection does adhere to the archive's mission and is worthwhile to accession and make available to patrons, does the material abide by the archive's collection policy?<sup>9</sup> Will the Smith collection add value to both our institution as a whole as well as the collections we already hold? Having a strong collections policy is a must for all archives and its criteria dictates what types of material and collections the archive should take in and seek out.

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<sup>8</sup> Stapleton, Lecture Notes Sept. 6, 2012

<sup>9</sup> Stapleton, Lecture Notes Sept. 6, 2012

If the Lucille Smith collection abides by the archive's mission and collection policy, then it is important for me, as the chief archivist, to visit the collection and survey the material. It would be crucial to survey the papers at the time-sensitive condominium first. For the survey, I need to document the collection's size, condition, and value of its intellectual content.<sup>10</sup> First I want to make sure that our institution has enough space to properly hold and store the material. Does our facility have enough resources to adequately store the collection? Do we have the resources for the long-term preservation of the collection? Second, I seek to ensure that the content itself is not damaged and can survive the transfer to our facility. Last, it is important to browse through the material and note major works or projects within the collection. This would not be an item-level analysis, but it would allow me to determine if the collection will add value to our archive and be of use to patrons, while at the same time ensuring that the material adheres to our collections policy.

After performing a survey of the collection at both locations, it will be necessary to appraise the value of the collection against the resources of our institution.<sup>11</sup> First, it must be determined if all of the content is of value to our archive. Appraisal, which "takes place in the assessment of the value that records have for their creating entity," must determine the collection's long-term and enduring value.<sup>12</sup> Then it must be determined if all of the material will be acquired. This adheres to the archival principle of selection, or the "practical and controlled application of appraisal principles to a body of material."<sup>13</sup> Will we take all of the material? Do her legal heirs require that we take all of the material? Second, I need to ensure that the archive has the resources to process the collection in due time. It is not worthwhile to ingest a collection

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<sup>10</sup> Stapleton, Lecture Notes Sept. 6, 2012

<sup>11</sup> Stapleton, Lecture Notes Sept. 13, 2012

<sup>12</sup> Eastwood, 48

<sup>13</sup> Eastwood, 47

if it will sit for years without being processed. Furthermore, there may be a stipulation to process it in a recommended time frame by her legal heirs. Therefore it would be beneficial to draw up a draft processing plan for our archive's ability to process Smith's collection. In terms of her papers as U.S. Congresswoman, it will need to be determined if any of this work is sensitive material, for which it may be best not to acquire this content, as it may be more trouble than it is worth. The archive's collections are our "primary asset, but they are also a liability."<sup>14</sup> Last, it will need to be noted if the collection is in its original order, following the principle of respect de fonds.<sup>15</sup> Seeing as Smith's papers were split between two locations, this may be an issue.

If all of the above turns out positively, then the archive can acquire the collection and move it to our facility. In terms of acquiring the collection, I will need to ensure a strong and clear term of acquisition is drawn up between the institution and Smith's legal heirs.<sup>16</sup> Because our institution follows a mission of providing access to our patrons, the purpose of providing access of the Smith collection will need to be spelled out within the terms. Furthermore we want to ensure that the terms of acquisition does not clash with our institution's mission, by seeking to restrict access to specific groups of researchers or for certain documents.

In following these archival principles, I can ensure a comprehensive analysis of the collection and its value to our institution. These principles allow the archive to properly process and hold the collection while ensuring access to researchers and patrons of the institution. By adhering to a strict and thorough acquisitions policy, we can ensure that collections we ingest strengthen our institution and add value to our holdings.

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<sup>14</sup> Stapleton, Lecture Notes Oct. 11, 2012

<sup>15</sup> Stapleton, Lecture Notes Sept. 27, 2012

<sup>16</sup> Stapleton, Lecture Notes Oct. 11, 2012

### Prompt C

The work of an archivist can differ based on many differing variables. For instance, an archivist can work at a facility that is technologically up-to-date or one that lacks necessary funding. An archivist can work with a strong staff of professionals or be the lone archivist of an institution. Furthermore, the role of an archivist can vary depending on if working in a nonprofit or for-profit institution. As the lone archivist for the for-profit corporation Jones & Co, founded in 1865 and quickly approaching its 150-year anniversary, a great way to bring value and recognition to the archive and its collection would be to showcase the history of the corporation for its upcoming sesquicentennial.

Dear President Jones,

As you are aware, Jones & Co.'s 150-year anniversary is quickly approaching. I believe this would be a wonderful opportunity for the corporation to showcase to the public our value within our region and the historic legacy which has built and strengthened Jones & Co. over these 150 years. By sharing the company's history and utilizing historic memorabilia to make known our 150 years of service, Jones & Co. will stand out amongst some of the iconic and long-lasting corporations of the nation.

As the head archivist for the corporation's collections, I have already surveyed our collection and pulled out various photographs and film reels chronicling both the founding and lasting history of Jones & Co. Based on the items chosen, I believe they would work wonderfully in two mediums: that of an exhibit to document the growth of the company, as well as to be used throughout advertisements and marketing for Jones & Co.

Many large corporations are embracing their long-established historical legacy through utilization of their archival repositories by sharing material between the archives and their marketing departments. A strong example of this is the Coca Cola Corporation which takes pride in its historic legacy and uses that long history to strengthen their brand. By using the archive's photos and film reels, the marketing team can put together a strategy for advertising the legacy of Jones & Co. while highlighting the company's years of service and reliability through these historic documents. This iconic branding would be well-received by the public and highlight our company's commitment to the region. The archival material pulled is well-documented and prepared to be incorporated into advertisement mediums.

Furthermore, a small exhibit documenting the corporation's history would be ideal for the lobby of the building, and would send a strong message to employees of the company's appreciation of the past, including past service, in moving forward. I've already pulled documents which would highlight this theme well, including photographs chronicling our expansion from the downtown facility, staff photos, and awards of service from the city throughout the years. Since these items are well-documented, it would be no trouble for me to write up short descriptions of the photographs and documents. However, the archive does not have adequate display cases to showcase in the lobby. While there is a small amount of funding available on the archive's budget, this value was slated to be assigned to increasingly our digitization efforts through the purchase of up-to-date technology. This pressing issue would need to be resolved prior to green-lighting the project.

While browsing through the collections resting at our downtown facilities, I pulled photographs of our company's founder and various memorabilia from the founding of Jones & Co. I believe this material could be used both in marketing and in the lobby exhibit. Our exhibit



could have a display case which celebrates the founding of Jones & Co. in 1865 with historic primary documents. This exhibit would complement the previously mentioned display which would highlight the company's growth throughout the years. These items are available for use, however I'm worried about their long-term value as the downtown facilities are not conducive to long-term preservation.

Utilizing our archival repository is an easy way to showcase the value which Jones & Co. places on its historic legacy. While in the past the company has not supported historical exhibits, I believe the sesquicentennial is a great focal point to share the corporation's history both internally and externally. I hope you will take these suggestions into consideration, and please know that I am available to discuss these ideas further.

Sincerely,  
Vincent Capone

Archivists can don many hats throughout their line of work. In this situation, it will be necessary to take a management-based mentality and assume to role of expert, stressing the value of your expertise.<sup>17</sup> It is wise to remember that archives do not always naturally fit in with for-profit corporations and will need to make their presence and usefulness known.<sup>18</sup> In this situation, the lone archivist needs to act as an entrepreneur, and determine how the archive can develop and respond to change, while preparing for the future and voicing its need for resources.<sup>19</sup>

In creating the exhibit for Jones & Co., the lone archivist will need to plan ahead before presenting the idea to management. Thematic or subject exhibits "can emphasize the activities and contributions of a specific institution, organization, family, or individual that is important to

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<sup>17</sup> Dearstyne, 198

<sup>18</sup> Dearstyne, 189

<sup>19</sup> Stapleton, Lecture Notes Oct. 11, 2012

a local community, region, or nation.”<sup>20</sup> In the above case, the celebration of the company’s sesquicentennial would be the perfect opportunity to share the company’s history both to the general public (through advertisements) and to employees and staff. The archivist should pull archival materials deemed relevant to the display, and “must be tailored to meet the needs, capabilities, and resources of the institution.”<sup>21</sup> Will all of the resources be allocated from the archive’s budget or will additional funds need to be set aside? Next, the archivist needs to “identify who will be viewing its exhibits, or the audience it wishes to attract.”<sup>22</sup> In the above case, the lobby exhibit aims to highlight the growth of the company throughout the years and the value it holds within the region as well as the value it has for its employees throughout its history. Finally, the end result will hopefully be an increase in the value and historical importance the archive holds for the corporation’s legacy moving forward, and this could in turn bring a change to resource allocation, and in the above scenario, could bring a change to materials resting in the downtown headquarters’ inadequate facility.

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<sup>20</sup> Bradsher, 230

<sup>21</sup> Bradsher, 229

<sup>22</sup> Bradsher, 229